

Archdeaconry Synod Report 2021

Synod this year was held on a 2 day Zoom video call on 2nd to 3rd February. The days were long, beginning at 08.30 and ending around 16.00. Fuerteventura was represented by Bob, Judie, Ruth and Merisa.

The theme of the conference was “Behold, I stand at the door and knock” Rev 3:20 (Living the Gospel during the pandemic).

As well as input from Rt Rev Robert Innes, Bishop of Gibraltar, Europe, Rt Rev David Hamid and Ven David Waller, Archdeacon of Gibraltar, there were some interesting sessions led by Dr Jane Williams, McDonald Professor in Christian Studies, Most Rev Stephen Cottrell, Archbishop of York and Very Rev Jeffrey John, Dean of St Albans (soon to re-locate to Paris).

Finances

Bishop Robert, Andrew Caspari (Chief Operating Officer) and Gwen Furniston, Archdeaconry Treasurer all spoke at various times about financial matters.

At the beginning of the year we had £4 million as a Diocese, but the Church Commissioners gave a grant of £210k and hardship funds have helped many people and Chaplaincies. There has been a spirit of support and generosity during this year which has been very hard financially for some Chaplaincies, who have been helped by others in the Archdeaconry. As we go forward there needs to be clarity and confidence in these uncertain times because the Diocese reached a crisis point in 2017 when this wasn't the case.

Looking forward there will be no increase in the Common Fund in 2021, and predictions of 10% in 2022, 15% in 2023 and 20% in 2024. There will be £150k in the Hardship Fund in 2021 and £50k in 2022. So by 2024 there will be a deficit of £50k and we will have drawn on £1.4m of reserves. The predicted value of reserves left by 2024 is £2.8m.

Stewardship and encouraging regular giving will be important. If each electoral role member gives £1 a week this would raise £500k a year.

Good news is that the Diocese has been awarded a trust grant by the Allchurches Trust. This equates to £110k in 2020, £75k in 2021 and £65k in 2022. This will be used to increase our digital presence, with a new website and new communications staff. It will help create new networks, including children and youth, enhancing our ability to work and share together. There will be more training and an increase of our profile and mission.

AGMs

Some chaplaincies didn't hold AGMs in 2020, but this year the AGM can happen online, by the end of May. The Chair of the meeting needs to spell out that the electorate are people present and on the electoral roll at the time of the vote. Contested elections cannot be held online.

2021 will be a year of recovery and moving forward

Damian Thwaites, Communications Director mentioned 7 areas to consider:

Adjusting – to new realities, pandemic and Brexit implications for Spain and Portugal

Campaigning – on causes we care about, including diversity, care for creation, the refugee and migration policy, freedom of religious expression, gender-based violence against women, the clergy Covenant and being a digital Diocese

Updating – the website is clunky, hard to use and has too much old material on it. Last year there were 100+ stories and there is a shared responsibility among content owners to clear out and clean up the website. The Safeguarding section is currently a key priority

Upgrading – to a new website, using the Allchurches Trust grant money during 2022

Building up – new online diocesan communications, social media, video and networks. This will all be reviewed and the communications team expanded

Training – more Zoom and social media training, including use of Facebook, Twitter, A Church near You and planning in advance

Resourcing – for digital communications, social media, sourcing and preparing stories to publish across the diocese. Each chaplaincy was encouraged to have a “communications lead”

Safeguarding

This is a priority for the diocese following an Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA). There is a new virtual leadership training course, which puts the emphasis on victims rather than attempting to protect clergy and others involved in indecent acts. Grace Fagan, Head of Safeguarding mentioned 6 points:

- the structure of safeguarding in the Church of England
- revising clergy discipline
- information sharing between the Church of England and the Church in Wales (so if there are concerns about an incumbent in one region and he/she moves this information is also passed on to the new region)
- more widely shared information across regions but also with statutory partners
- support for victims and survivors
- auditing (reviewing work so that victims always come first)

The Clergy Covenant

Bishop David Hamid spoke of this new Covenant about clergy care and well being. He talked about the biblical view of covenant being permanent and pointed out that ordination is a sacramental event within a community. Within the mystical relationship of God it is complex, all embracing and costly. Burnout is a growing problem. Career structure is fairly flat and the stipend is slightly less than the £26,500 salary required for foreign workers seeking a UK work visa. Tied housing can cause insecurity and the challenges of privacy. Clergy work around 60 hours a week and most only take one day a week off. He proposed it should be 2 days a week off because inevitably issues arise on the

allocated day of rest. It can be a lonely profession and often the more effective the person is the more work they end up doing.

The 3 priorities for clergy are prayer, work and rest. Work began on the Covenant in 2017 at General Synod and the Act of Synod was passed in February 2019. As the church declines in influence and with economic uncertainties there are corrosive levels of stress. We all need to mutually share responsibility for clergy. Boundaries of time and space are a perpetual difficulty. Clergy are responsible for ministering to the flock of Christ pastorally, in the sacraments and in preaching. A vicar in England is also responsible for everyone in the geographical parish (not just church congregations). Is also a chaplain in the Gibraltar diocese living the vocation of a priest to minister to everyone in a given place? When recruiting a new vicar we need to have the Covenant in mind.

During this time of pandemic we need to realise there has been no training or experience for what we face. There is extra worry about the well being of people, exhaustion from working in 2 dimensions (face to face and remotely), some sustaining practices are not available (like Communion), the future is uncertain and we have lost the weekly cycle of events. How to plan in a full on 7 day schedule?

The Covenant urges us to care for the church's precious gift (clergy), to strengthen partnership and to bear spiritual fruit in the church.

There are 3 documents under the title of *The Church of England Covenant for the Care and Well-being of Clergy* which can be accessed and downloaded:

- *A document for reflection and action for bishops and the wider church*
- *A document for reflection and action for the clergy*
- *A document for reflection and action for local congregations*

Our Archdeaconry Synod link with Peru

We had a live link with Bishop Jorge Aguilar in Lima and Luis the priest who attended Synod last year in Spain. They also provided 2 video clips for us to watch. During the pandemic 9 million people in Peru have lost their jobs, many leaving cities to return to their homes in the countryside as subsistence farmers. There has been political unrest with 3 different Presidents in a short period of time. The church is feeding and caring for people, especially the poor, vulnerable and disabled. Lockdown has been hard for many who live in small, cramped conditions. Luis works 4,000 metres above sea level in the Altiplano region. He sends sermons via mobile phone and wants to set up a community canteen to feed local people. He is also looking for funding for a guinea pig farm in the Andes. He thanked us for our financial donations and encouraged us to keep giving. He said all 23 clergy and their families have benefitted from our generosity.

Archdeacon's final report (David Waller)

In the past he said Archdeacons travelled to meet people face-to-face. But in these times Zoom has been invaluable. Chaplains have been appointed, webinars and training have taken place. "We are more than we think we are" was the

theme of his summary. The distance of our Archdeaconry, from Tenerife to Andorra is 2,250 miles. We cover 5 nations, 27 chaplaincies and 58 church communities. We have shown resilience through the pandemic, in spite of lockdowns, Brexit, political upheaval, sadness, fear and tiredness. We have had physical and online worship and ministry. There has been creativity and team work between clergy and lay members and online the number of people engaging with us has increased. Many are missing Communion and have financial worries. But there is hope for the future and we have been generous and honest with each other across the Archdeaconry. We need to be kind to ourselves and each other and hopefully see each other in Spain again next year!

M MacInnes
7 February 2021